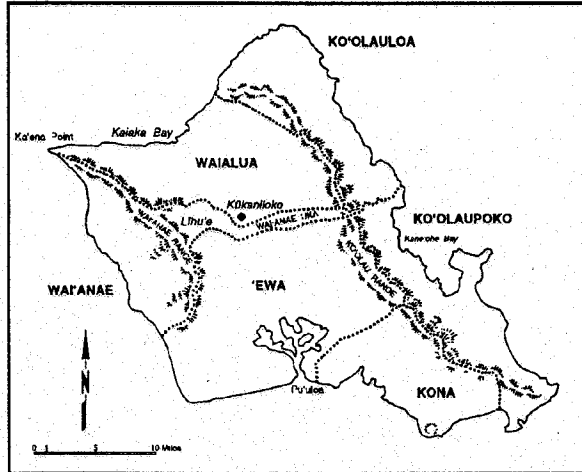


THE WAHIAWĀ PLATEAU

Wahiawā is within the central upland plateau of O'ahu as defined by the Wai'anae and Ko'olau Mountain ranges. These cool uplands were once covered with a forest of 'ōhi'a, koa, and fragrant kupukupu ferns. Three political districts of old O'ahu extended onto this plateau - Wai'anae, Waialua, and 'Ewa.



These uplands were a place where chiefs were born, where famed chiefs lived, and where key battles for the control of O'ahu were fought. The royal birthsite of Kūkaniloko and the associated Ho'olonopahu Heiau were within the Waialua district. Nearby was Lihue within the lands of Wai'anae Uka. Lihue was a noted royal center of O'ahu between A.D. 1400-1500. The chiefs of this area were called Lō chiefs who preserved their chiefly kapu by living in the uplands of Waialua.

As a chiefly area, several heiau were built on the slopes and in the gulches of the Wai'anae Range facing the Wahiawā Plateau and along the shoreline of Waialua. The numerous streams and the rich agricultural soils of the Wahiawā Plateau supported extensive fields of sweet potato and yam.

Major trails crossed the island and intersected near Kūkaniloko. The Waialua Trail ran from Waialua through Wahiawā to 'Ewa. The Kolekole Trail from Wai'anae crossed the Wai'anae Range and joined the Waialua Trail near Kūkaniloko.

Wahiawā is translated as place of rumbling. It is said that Wahiawā is where thunderstorms, the voices of the ancestral gods, welcomed an offspring of divine rank. Being the center of O'ahu, Kūkaniloko is also symbolic of the piko (navel cord) and thus, birth.

KŪKANILOKO BIRTHSTONES STATE MONUMENT

Kūkaniloko Birthstones is one of the most significant cultural sites on O'ahu. This significance was recognized in the listing of the site on the National and Hawai'i Registers of Historic Places. A 5-acre parcel encompassing the site was acquired by the State of Hawai'i in 1992 and placed under the jurisdiction of State Parks to preserve and interpret this important historic site.

The site is managed and maintained through a partnership between State Parks, the Hawaiian Civic Club of Wahiawā, and the Friends of Kūkaniloko. Additional support for interpretive efforts at the site has been provided by the Wahiawā Hospital Association and the Wahiawā Community and Business Association in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Wahiawā (1998).



STATE OF HAWAII
Dept. of Land and
Natural Resources
Division of State Parks



Hawaiian Civic Club of
Wahiawā and Friends of
Kūkaniloko, Curators of
Kūkaniloko Birthstones



Wahiawā Hospital Association



Wahiawā Community and
Business Association

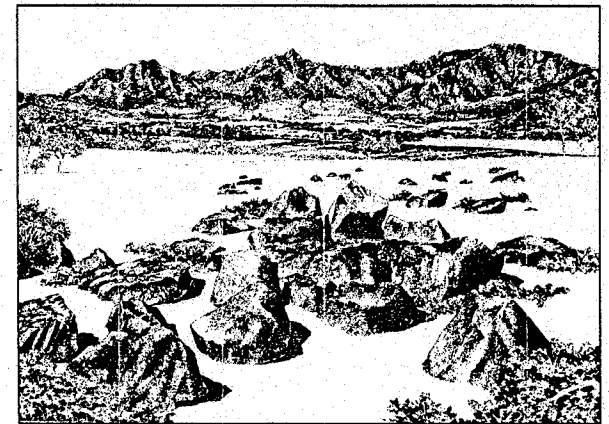
PRESERVE HAWAII'S PAST FOR THE FUTURE

E mālama no kēia mua aku

Please do not move, remove, wrap, or scar the stones. Leaving items such as coins, incense, or candles can cause damage to the stones. Please show respect and help us protect this site for future generations.

STATE OF HAWAII

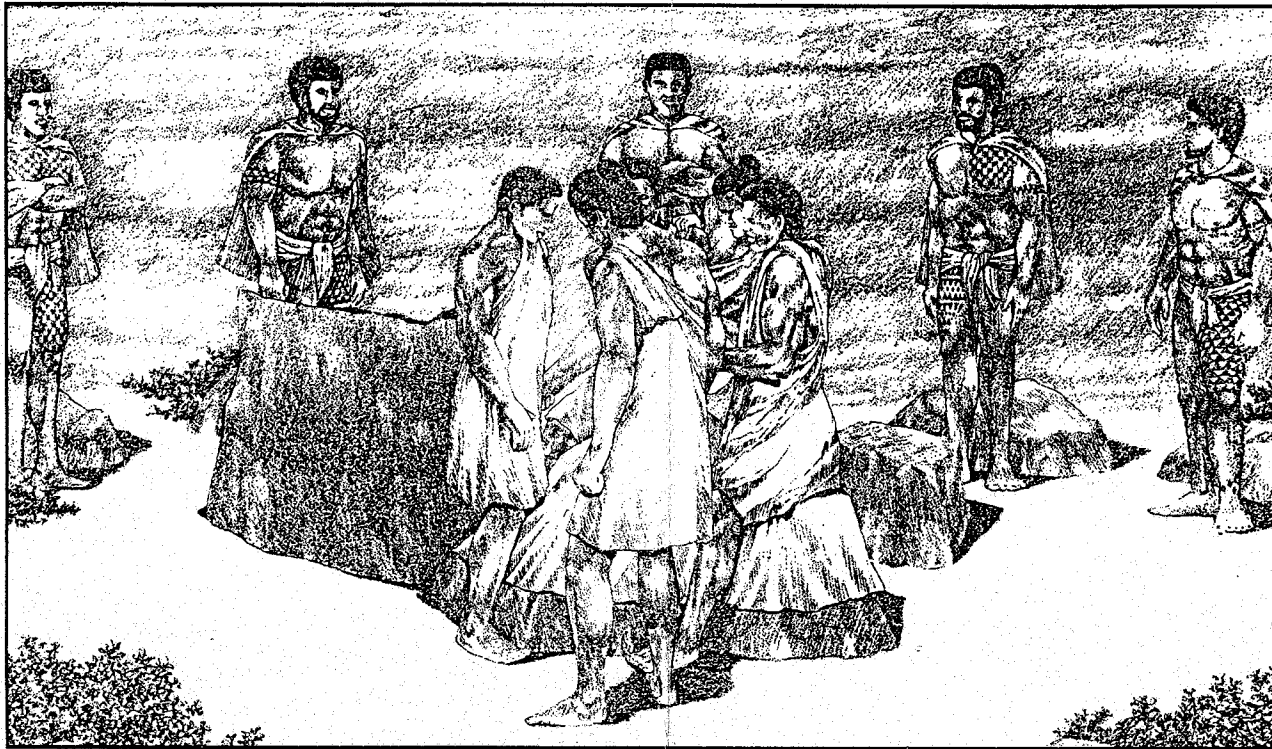
KŪKANILOKO BIRTHSTONES STATE MONUMENT



*No Kūkaniloko ko'u aloha,
Ke kupa noho kula a o Kalakoa,
Kahi hanau hoi o na ali'i,
Wohi hoi a o Hawai'i nei.*

For Kūkaniloko is my love,
The native born that dwells on the plain of Kalakoa
Birth place indeed of the chiefs,
Highest chiefs (wohi rank) indeed of Hawai'i.

Wahiawā, O'ahu



THE BIRTHPLACE OF ALI'I

Beginning with the birth of Kapawa, Kūkaniloko became recognized as the royal birthsite on O'ahu. Based on genealogical records, the dates of Kapawa's birth range from A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1400 but the date could be earlier. Kūkaniloko remained a significant site for royal births into the late 1700s as seen by the efforts of Kamehameha I to have his successor, Liholiho, born at Kūkaniloko in 1797.

Marriages were arranged between *ali'i* (chiefly) lines to promote the social separation of the *ali'i* and *maka'āinana* (commoners) as well as ranking within the *ali'i* class. The rank of an offspring reflected the parent's genealogy over many generations. Kūkaniloko was religiously sanctioned and symbolically marked as a place of chiefly power. Birth at Kūkaniloko assured a child high-ranking status and the privileges of this status. It also maintained the purity of the royal lineages which gave chiefs their godly status and the right to be leaders.

The birth of a child at Kūkaniloko was witnessed by 36 chiefs. Immediately after birth, the child was taken to the nearby *waihai heiau* of Ho'olonopahu where purification rites and the cutting of the umbilical cord were overseen by 48 chiefs.

Chiefs witnessing the birth of a royal child at Kūkaniloko.

At Ho'olonopahu, the beating of the sacred drums (Hawea and 'Ōpuku) announced the royal birth. There were 7 days of purification for the chiefess after giving birth and great care was taken with the disposal of the navel cord of the child.

The following chant memorializes Kapawa, first born at Kūkaniloko:

'O Kapawa, 'o ke ali'i o Waialua
I hanau i Kūkaniloko
'O Wahiawā ke kahua
'O Lihu'e ke ʻēve
'O Ka'ala ka piko
'O Kapukapuākea ka a'a
'O Kaiaka i Māeaea
He keiki ali'i no Waialua i O'ahu

Kapawa, the chief of Waialua,
Was born at Kūkaniloko;
Wahiawā the site;
At Lihu'e the placenta,
At Ka'ala the navel cord,
At Kapukapuākea (*heiau*) the caul,
(*Heiau*) of Kaiaka at Māeaea;
A chiefly child of Waialua, O'ahu.

Kūkaniloko was one of two places in Hawai'i specifically designated for the birth of high ranking children. The other site was Holoholokū at Wailua on Kaua'i. These royal birthing sites maintained the antiquity and purity of the chiefly lineages on O'ahu and Kaua'i. It is said that chiefs from Hawai'i Island and Maui often sought greater prestige by marrying those with strong ancestral lineages. Therefore, the significance of Kūkaniloko and the events that occurred here reached beyond the island of O'ahu.

The birthsite consisted of 2 rows of 18 stones for the 36 chiefs. The *kuapu'u* or backrest stone was named Kūkaniloko. With assistance from her attendants, the chiefess would lean against the stone and follow the prescribed regulations for birthing (*liloe kapu*). A child born in the presence of the chiefs was called *he ali'i* (a chief), *he akua* (a god), *he wela* (a blaze of heat). The birth of at least 4 renowned chiefs of O'ahu is recorded at Kūkaniloko - La'a (ca. 1420), Mā'ilikūkahi (ca. 1520), Kalanimanuia (ca. 1600), and Kākuhihewa (ca. 1640). The reign of these chiefs was marked by good deeds, peace, and prosperity.

Today, the site is marked by 180 stones covering an area of about 0.5 acre. Many of these stones have surface depressions and fluted edges with a coating of red dirt. These surfaces are probably a combination of natural weathering and human craftsmanship over many generations.

WAHINE HĀPAI

To the south of the birthstones is the Wai'anae Range with prominent peaks such as Ka'ala and a dip known as Kolekole. According to oral tradition, these features create an image of a pregnant woman known as "*wahine hāpai*".

From here at Kūkaniloko, the setting of the sun at peaks (*pu'u*) along the Wai'anae Range could be observed and used as a calendar. Some of the stones at Kūkaniloko may have been used as reference points to observe the sun setting behind Mt. Ka'ala at the equinox. Was the birth of a new *ali'i* also marked in relationship to this calendar?

